



For and about SBA in Region IV

Message from the Regional Administrator

In early September, district directors, regional administrators, and headquarters program chiefs met with Administrator Preston in New Orleans for our first senior management meeting since he assumed office in July. I left that meeting with renewed excitement and feeling more confident than ever about where we are headed as an Agency.



What set this meeting apart was the Administrator's hands on style of management, his genuine interest in developing effective solutions to our challenges, and his plan for including field office representatives in helping

set the course SBA will take over the next several years. It is clear to me that the agenda we will soon have before us will be a no nonsense plan to strengthen SBA from the bottom up and better position us to impact economic growth as a result.

We have made tremendous strides over the past five years to expand the use of SBA programs. I am very proud of our accomplishments and how successful we have been in the Southeast. As we begin a new fiscal year, I challenge you to keep up the good work and to be alert for new and better approaches to serve both our internal and external customers and for new and fresh opportunities to make SBA the best we can be.

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Administrator Preston Visits Mississippi

Meets with Small Business Owners and Staff

Administrator Steven Preston was in Jackson, Mississippi on September 5 where he held a series of meetings with business owners, elected officials including Governor Haley Barbour, and with district and branch office staff. The new Administrator hit the ground running after his appointment by President Bush in July. He has been traveling the country meeting with field staff, visiting our operations centers, talking with resource partners, and taking time to hear first hand what our small business customers have to say. This was his first official visit to Region IV.



During his meeting with business owners, the Administrator fielded questions and heard concerns on a range of small business topics, such as procurement assistance and our response to Hurricane Katrina. While some participants had concerns about the disaster application process, others offered kudos for the responsiveness of SBA disaster and district office staff.

The Administrator shared his belief in SBA's core mission and that he plans to move the agency forward and address our challenges in a manner that will be less about policy and more about process. His focus will be to ensure that we are concentrating on the right outcomes; that we are truly customer centric; that our employees have the tools, training and work environment to be effective and enthusiastic; and that our operations are transparent, efficient and accountable. "None of this comes by accident," Administrator Preston said, "We need to pursue it doggedly every day."

During his meeting with business owners the Administrator said that "many people think of the agency as relatively small in budgetary dollars – but let me tell you, our scope is very significant."

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Technology Bridging the ^ Communication Gap - Part 2

Andre L. Travis – Lead FITS

SBA's technology upgrade is well underway. By year's end, each employee will be equipped with a new desktop PC and software. While most changes will be invisible, there will be a new look and feel with Windows XP as our operating system, Outlook 2003 as our email client and Microsoft Office 2003 as our productivity manager.

Before any anxiety about adjusting to new software sets in, understand that the basics of the software programs you know so well will remain unchanged. Also, be assured that for offices without an in-house IT manager, I will be onsite to provide hands on assistance to ease the transition.

In my last column, I introduced some tools to help bridge the communication gap between end users and technical staff. With the migration to new software systems in process, this is the perfect time to continue discussing practices that will help facilitate a smooth transition.

You will recall that the first four steps to successful communication are: (1) stay calm; (2) speak clearly and in layman's terms; (3) identify and explain the problem; (4) report non-critical problems to your DIRM via email.

In some circumstances a remote technician may be walking you through steps to diagnose your computer and then to fix the problem. Following technical instructions by phone can be challenging. However, by adhering to these simple guidelines you will help resolve your problem more quickly, minimizing both your down time and level of frustration.

When following technical instructions:

1. Repeat all commands back before doing anything.
2. After entering a command, repeat what you have done and ask for the next step before pressing enter
3. Communicate that you have completed a task
4. Describe what is happening on your computer
5. If uncertain about what you were asked to type, request it phonetically (A for Alpha, B for Bravo, etc)
6. Feel you made a mistake, STOP and explain what you did.
7. Unsure at anytime ASK QUESTIONS !!

Once your problem is resolved, write down the solution provided by the technician for future reference. Remember, maintaining your computer's health is primarily your responsibility and education is the best strategy to avoid problems. The Office of Human Capital has made training on standard SBA software available at www.usalearn.gov. Also check out the Microsoft quick reference guides at <http://yes.sba.gov/octs/training.html>. Happy computing!

Transitions

Lynn Douthett appointed DDD NC

Guy Sawyer hired DDD TN

Ken Hamilton hired Sup. EDS N. FL

Carol Doubleday, FL Admin. Officer Retired

Robert Chavarria, S.FL promoted to DD

Lower Rio Grande Valley DO

L.D. Ralph

Alabama Lead Lender Relations Specialist

Contributed By Susan Baxter, Alabama PIO

Alabama's Acting Lead Lender Relations Specialist L. D. Ralph has plenty to do. Not only does he manage the office's lender relations staff, he is the lender relations staff. As the point person for lender relations in Alabama's 9 person district office, L.D. not only markets SBA programs to Alabama's lending community, but conducts training and lender portfolio reviews as well. But with a 160% increase in SBA guaranteed lending in the state between 2003 and 2005 it looks like all the work is beginning to pay off.

L.D. was born and raised in Arab, Alabama, located near Huntsville in north Alabama. He graduated from the University of Montevallo, a small school with a strong academic reputation located about 30 miles south of Birmingham. His first job out of college was as a space camp counselor at the U. S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville. His federal career began in January of 1991 when he became a revenue officer for the Internal Revenue Service. He moved to the SBA as a loan officer in July of 1998.

Family is a central focus for L.D. He met wife Laura, a native of Huntsville, while in college at Montevallo. September will mark their 13th anniversary. They have two children; Wesley, 9, and Lindsey, who is 6. And, of course, the family includes Wesley's two pet rats and Lindsey's three fish.



The Ralph family lives in Alabaster, AL where Laura volunteers weekly at Creek View Elementary, where the children attend school. They are active members of their church and are both involved in Spotlight – a children's church program – where Laura

does games and L.D. runs a sound board. A huge fan of SEC college football, particularly the University of Alabama, L.D. spends his limited free time reading or perfecting his musical skills on the ukulele. The family returns to Arab and Huntsville as often as possible to visit extended family.

Region IV Firms Earn Top MED Week Honors



Two Region IV companies won top honors at the National MED Week luncheon September 1. National Minority Small Business of the Year went to Jose Diaz of Orlando, Florida. owner of DEI. This 8(a) firm is a premier provider of cutting edge simulation and military training systems supporting fixed-wing aircraft, rotorcraft and ground combat vehicles. Initially financed with credit cards, DEI now employs 80 with \$12 to \$15 million in revenues.

8(a) Graduate Firm of the Year went to Operation Desert Storm veteran and Tennessee businessman William Biles who launched his janitorial service by landing 21 private sector contracts while still working full time as a truck driver. He later obtained 8(a) certification and quit his job to run Biles Janitorial full time.

Mississippi Staff Recognized during National Management Conference

The Mississippi District and Gulfport Branch office staffs were recognized during the national management conference in New Orleans in early September for their hard work in support of the Agency's Katrina recovery efforts and their continued efforts to serve the state's small business community even as they faced incredible personal losses.

Each staff member received a trophy commemorating their efforts. The Louisiana District staff was also recognized at the event.



Mississippi DO and Gulfport Branch Staff - left to right – Gary Reed, Rhonda Fisher, Janita Stewart, Penney Melton, Bridget Johnson-Fells, James McClendon, Deborah Dean, Judith Adcock, Nuby Fowler, Rosetta Harris, Delores Smith, and Alice Doss.

NC DD Makes Debut on TV Brazil

North Carolina District Director Lee Cornelison was interviewed for Brazilian TV Clube Pernambuco, a station in Pernambuco, a rural state on the east coast of Brazil. The interview was conducted by Klaiton Silva, a reporter who produces segments in the U. S. for the station. The story was part of the station's effort to encourage the development of programs to foster entrepreneurship in Pernambuco and focused on the resources available in the U. S. to help small business owners. You can see the interview at -- <http://media.putfile.com/VIDEO---Pequenas-empresas-nos-EUA>

South Carolina Company Recognizes SBA for Outstanding Service

Rick Miller and Theresa Singleton Honored

RCS Corporation, an engineering and environmental protection and restoration consulting firm based in Aiken, S.C., has committed to donate \$10,000 to endow a music education fund in honor of Charleston, S.C. based PCR Ridgeley (Rick) Miller and SCDO DDD Theresa Singleton. The ***Miller-Singleton Orchestra Project*** will help develop stringed instrument programs for economically disadvantaged students in Aiken County, S.C.

Miller and Singleton are cited by RCS for their work in securing an overdue payment from the Navy for defense contract work the company performed in 2004. Final payment was withheld as the result of a dispute over performance delays. Ultimately, with the support of Miller and Singleton, RCS prevailed and the Navy released the \$500,000 due the company. According to RCS President, Carlos F. Garcia, the company was \$500,000 in debt in December 2005 and was very close to going out of business. Thanks to the work of Rick Miller and Theresa Singleton, they are now out of debt and recovering.

Named the number 1 fastest growing new small business in America by Entrepreneur Magazine in 1997, RCS has over 140 employees across the United States. The company credits part of their success over the years to the opportunities made available through SBA and the support they have received from the South Carolina District Office.

The ***Miller-Singleton Orchestra Project*** will help develop stringed instrument programs for middle school students, assist high school band programs expand their capacity to include stringed instruments, and increase the number of students participating in the Aiken Regional Chamber Orchestra.